

News Release



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MSHA kicks off annual Winter Alert campaign *2008 theme: 'Sack winter hazards, score with Winter Alert!'*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Department of Labor’s Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) today kicked off the 2008 Winter Alert campaign to warn miners and mine operators of the dangers colder weather can bring to the mining environment. Statistics show that most coal mine explosions throughout history have occurred in the period between October and March.

“We need to get the attention of working miners around the nation and remind them of the hazards associated with winter weather,” said Richard E. Stickler, acting assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health. “There are actions that miners and mine operators can take to reduce these cold-weather hazards, and this campaign will provide them with useful information and potentially life-saving warnings.”

Low barometric pressures and low humidity, coupled with seasonal drying of many areas in underground coal mines, have contributed to the larger number of mine explosions during winter months. Other hazards include limited visibility, icy haulage roads and walkways, and the freezing and thawing effect on highwalls at surface mines.

MSHA warns miners and operators at underground mines to ensure proper ventilation, apply liberal amounts of rock dust, conduct frequent and thorough examinations, and keep escapeways clear of impediments. Miners and operators of surface mines should examine the stability of highwalls, remove snow and ice from walkways, de-ice any equipment, and apply salt and sand liberally where needed.

During their normal inspection duties, MSHA inspectors will distribute newly developed posters, hard-hat stickers and other handouts containing the Winter Alert message to working miners. For more information about Winter Alert, visit the agency’s Web site at www.msha.gov.

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